

# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **AGRICULTURAL REFORMS, PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT AND EAC MEMBERSHIP DISCUSSED AT DPM**

27 November 2007

KIGALI, RWANDA – The second day of the 2007 Government of Rwanda and Development Partners Meeting broke for lunch on Tuesday having completed a series of discussions on key sectors for Rwanda's development.

Building on yesterday's opening sessions, where Rwanda's new Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy was unveiled, the sector-level discussions focused on key challenges facing sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, governance and the private sector. Looking forward to development in each sector, Delegates discussed ways to finance the ambitious sector strategies contained in the EDPRS.

The role of agriculture in advancing the economic development agenda was a central topic for discussion at the meetings. "The objective for the agriculture sector in the coming years is to enable more of the 80% of Rwandans who depend on agriculture to rise out of poverty and to foster a more lucrative market for agricultural goods," explained the Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Mr. Anastase Murekezi. Part of this task will involve creating incentives for Rwandans to become less dependent on farming and more involved in other sectors.

As more Rwandan leave the agricultural sector and join industries, the importance of having strong infrastructure in place to support private sector growth was underscored by Government and development partners. "Effective transport, energy and information and communication technology systems are vital for a business environment where people will feel comfortable investing," said the Minister of Infrastructure, Mr. Stanislas Kamanzi.

The critical issue of population growth was brought up repeatedly. While the EDPRS sector strategies present ambitious medium-term development plans, it was pointed out that in the long-term, unchecked population growth could bring to naught any progress achieved by these plans. Several development partners recognized population growth as the greatest challenge facing Rwanda.

Tuesday morning also featured a session dedicated to the discussion of the opportunities and challenges presented by Rwanda's accession to the East African Community (EAC). "EAC membership will mean that Rwandan exports will have access to a market of over 100 million people and will open Rwanda to the world by facilitating Rwanda's links to global waterways and railways," said Ambassador Richard Sezibera, Chairman of the National Regional Integration Committee.

The 2007 Government of Rwanda and Development Partners Meeting continues this afternoon with official statements from development partners and the presentation of the DPM Communiqué